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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: CROSS-STRAIT RELATIONS

Summary: Taiwan's major Chinese-language dailies focused news coverage October 17 on Taiwan's UN referendum and on the ruling and opposition parties' reactions to Chinese President Hu Jintao's proposal at the 17th National Congress of the Communist Party of China Monday for a peace agreement with Taiwan. In terms of editorials and commentaries, a column in the pro-independence "Liberty Times" harshly criticized Hu's proposal and described it as a letter calling for the surrender of Taiwan. An editorial in the pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" criticized Washington's positive reaction to Hu's proposal. The article said "by pushing Taiwanese toward a settlement with a Chinese government that has no interest in the welfare of Taiwanese, the US pacifies the same dictatorship that is colonizing Tibet." An editorial in the centrist, KMT-leaning "China Times," however, discussed Beijing's strategic thinking behind such a proposal. The article said "Beijing is trying to create an image in the international community: Namely, it is Taipei, not Beijing, which is creating trouble across the Taiwan Strait." End summary.

A) "Hu Jintao's Nonsense Letter Calling for [Taiwan's] Surrender"

The "Free Talks" column in the pro-independence "Liberty Times" [circulation: 720,000] noted (10/17):

"... First, Hu Jintao proposed the peace agreement [with Taiwan] in his capacity as Secretary-General of the Communist Party of China (CPC) and in the party-to-party manner. Since Taiwan is a democratic country, on what basis can a Chinese political party propose a peace agreement to another country? Such a proposal is effectively akin to treating Taiwan as part of China and box Taiwan in its one-China 'principle.'

"Second, China's one-China [principle] refers to the People's Republic of China. If one follows Hu's train of thoughts, [the statement regarding] both sides of the Taiwan Strait discussing a formal end to the state of hostility would mean to Sinify and internalize the Taiwan issue. In that case, the peace agreement is in fact China's letter calling for Taiwan's surrender.

"Third, Taiwan and China are one country on each side [of the Taiwan Strait], and the KMT-CPC war was between the KMT and the CPC, which has nothing to do with Taiwan. The current hostility across the Taiwan Strait was caused by China's attempt to annex Taiwan. If China really wants to put an end to cross-Strait hostility, it can end it unilaterally by removing the thousand missiles [targeting Taiwan] and abolishing the Anti-Secession Law. Such ways would be real moves to extend an olive branch [to Taiwan]. ..."

B) "Seduced by a 'Moderate' Hu Jintao"

The pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" [circulation: 30,000] editorialized (10/17):

"When Chinese President Hu Jintao suggested at this week's Chinese

Communist Party (CCP) Congress that China and Taiwan could begin talks -- on condition that Taiwan accept the 'one-China' principle -- one might have assumed that literate China-watchers would cluck their tongues, think 'more of the same' and turn to more pressing internal political matters. Not so with the US' National Security Council (NSC), whose membership is delighted with Hu's 'moderate tone.' Spokesman Gordon Johndroe gave sober cross-Strait analysts cause for mirth when he suggested that Hu's rehash of old strategy amounted to new and constructive language. ...

"The fact is that the NSC's language assumes deep down that Taiwan is Chinese territory and that unification is inevitable, blocked only by technical political disagreements and the wicked designs of President Chen Shui-bian. The NSC's words make no allowance whatsoever for the extent of dissent in Taiwan on the 'one-China' policy or even the existence of such dissent; indeed, the NSC seems unaware that Taiwan's democracy movement was intertwined with the realization that independence from China is essential to protect democracy. All of this lends weight to sources that suggest US President George W. Bush is now playing a major role in cross-Strait policy. If this is true, Taiwanese have good reason to be concerned, and not just because he has been treating his Chinese counterpart with kid gloves ever since Bush's anomalous promise to defend Taiwan, 'whatever it takes,' in 2001. ...

"Too many US officials interpret 'one China' as a principle for unity and stability, yet they concede that on the far side of China things are far from unitary or stable. If the US values the integrity of Tibetan people and their religious leader, the Dalai Lama -- and are prepared to irritate the Chinese in showing it -- why is it that at every juncture so many US government agencies adopt a stance that emboldens Beijing regarding Taiwan? By pushing Taiwanese toward a settlement with a Chinese government that has no interest in the welfare of Taiwanese, the US pacifies the same dictatorship that is colonizing Tibet, punishing the devout and

making a global hero out of the Dalai Lama. It would be interesting to hear the NSC explain the reasoning behind this contradictory strategy."

C) "Beijing's Strategic Thinking behind Its Call for a Peace Agreement across the Taiwan Strait"

The centrist, KMT-leaning "China Times" [circulation: 400,000] editorialized (10/17):

"... Beijing's strategic thinking was very clear when it proposed a peace agreement [with Taiwan]. On the one hand, it will no longer dance to the tune of the internal agenda discussed at the campaigning in Taiwan. Instead, Beijing decided to 'cope with shifting situation by sticking to a fundamental principle' by unveiling a bigger framework. Such a framework is not meant to emphasize the enactment of the 'Anti-Secession Law' but to call positively for the signing of a peace agreement. For Beijing, the 'one-China' premise is already there, so the 'Anti-Secession Law' can easily hide behind the scene, and the call for 'signing a peace agreement' under such circumstances can fully demonstrate that its fundamental position with regard to cross-Strait relations is to seek reconciliation and to [resume] dialogue... To a certain extent, such a declaration by Beijing did not appeal to Taiwan alone but to the international community, because Beijing knows that the whole world is watching how Beijing will react to Taiwan's push on the 'UN referendum.' When it turned out that, while Taiwan is intensifying its campaign for the 'UN referendum,' Beijing not only did not make any harsh remarks but has made a gesture of seeking 'peace' and proposed a structure for dialogue, the image that Beijing has created in the international community is naturally a positive one. Washington's immediate approval to Beijing was an evident proof. In other words, Beijing is trying to create an image in the international community: Namely, it is Taiwan, not Beijing, which is creating trouble across the Taiwan Strait, and it is Beijing, not Taiwan, which is pursuing reconciliation and dialogue across the Taiwan Strait. ..."

WANG